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ABSTRACT

The State University of New York (SUNY)-Binghamton Career Development Center has developed a unique, simple and relatively inexpensive approach for delivery of services called the Quick Reference Guides (QRG) series. The guides provide self-instruction on career exploration, job searching, application to graduate school and related issues. Students can find answers to basic, routine questions and schedule appointments with counselors for more specialized needs, creating a savings in staff time which allows for more effective counselor/client contact. The QRG's are inexpensive to create, easily modified and ideal for an office that encourages self-help and must organize complex issues into manageable units. An excerpt from QRG 1 is included. (JW)

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Quick reference: a key to counseling

By DAVID L. ANDERSON, *State University of New York at Binghamton*

MANY CAREER COUNSELING and placement offices in higher education are facing an increase in demand for services with little hope for a commensurate increase in staff or budget support. The Career Development Center at SUNY-Binghamton is not alone in this situation, but we feel we have developed a unique, simple, and relatively inexpensive approach to the problem.

The office is a centralized university service that provides support for students and alumni in three major areas:

1. Counseling for career exploration and decision making;
2. Teaching job search skills and other placement assistance; and
3. Advising on the selection and application to graduate and professional schools.

The staff of the Center offers a variety of alternatives to deliver services. One of the most effective techniques (as judged by our students, alumni, administrators, and peers on other campuses) is our Quick Reference Guide series.

Most other offices have guide books and pamphlets dealing with career exploration and the job search, only to find that students read the parts that deal with their immediate concerns; they then seek individual advising on other topics. Rather than lessening the need for individual staff contact on basic needs, these guide books increase the demand.

The Quick Reference Guides (QRG) are a departure from the handbook approach; they provide instruction on career exploration, job search, application to graduate school, and related issues. Specifically, they are a collection of one, two, or three page information sheets dealing with individual issues. Each QRG is printed in the same format and uses the Center's logo, providing visibility for the Center and identifying them as part of the series. This approach allows the introduction of a particular concept and provides a referral to other resources.

The topics are taken from the most frequently asked questions. Each individual QRG is cross-referenced with other appropriate QRG's, materials in the Center's Career Resource Area (CRA), and seminars and workshops.

In this way a developmental model presents information to students, allowing students to work at their own pace. Less ambitious students can review the one or two QRG's that deal with their immediate concerns. Highly motivated students begin with the QRG that deals with their initial question or concern and move to other QRG's, books and pamphlets in the CRA, and possibly a workshop or seminar offered by the Center. They eventually seek individual contact with a counselor to deal with higher needs during walk-in hours or in an appointment. At this point counselors do not have to deal with basic, routine questions, but can devote themselves to the specialized needs of that student. This process is an effective and interesting use of counselors' time.

Students dropping by the Center receive immediate response to their questions through a QRG. The complex tasks that they face are broken down into manageable units in individual QRG's. Further explanation of the subject can be found through CRA materials, a schedule of seminars and workshops called "Transitions," individual contact with a Center staff member, or a service provided by another university office.

Some students are not ready for personal, individual assistance from an office they have never visited, with a staff they have never met. The QRG's, available as handouts near the Center entrance, provide an opportunity to check out the Center without personal

CDC

Career Development Center

QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE: 1

BASIC INFORMATION REQUIRED FOR EFFECTIVE CAREER DECISION MAKING

SELF-KNOWLEDGE	CAREER INFORMATION	JOB MARKET FORECASTS
(Consult "Transitions—Guide to Seminars & Workshops")	(Available in Career Resource Area—See QRG #18)	(Available in Career Resource Area—See QRG #18)

INTERESTS
(Think about how you spend your time)

ABILITIES
(See QRG's #3 & #4)

VALUES
(See QRG's #2 & #20)

DECISIONS
(See QRG's #16 & #23)

NATURE OF WORK

TRAINING REQUIRED FOR ENTRY AND ADVANCEMENT

PLACES OF EMPLOYMENT

WORK ENVIRONMENT

SALARY/FRINGE BENEFITS

DECISIONS

PROJECTED SUPPLY OF CANDIDATES

VS

NUMBER OF JOB OPENINGS

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contact. Although most students don't hesitate to seek attention, we try to meet the needs of all segments of the university community.

The Quick Reference Guides evolved from a half-dozen information sheets into thirty self-help handouts that form an essential component of the Center services. They are frequently used by Center staff to introduce concepts in workshops or as a basis for group exercises. On other occasions, workshop material may be modified into a Quick Reference Guide, allowing students not in attendance at the workshop to benefit from the material presented.

Other considerations include the ease with which an individual QRG can be modified without affecting the entire series. Changes can be made quickly and at low cost compared to changes in a multi-page pamphlet or booklet. The technique allows the Center to respond quickly to the new or changing needs of students.

Selected QRG's can also be used effectively to support other offices in the university. Currently, the series in its entirety has been used by the admissions office in working with guidance officers at high schools with a traditionally high number of applicants for SUNY-Binghamton. The campus parent's organization has used QRG's as discussion topics on career issues for parents and students. The office of Programs for Students with Disabilities has used the entire series on audio cassettes for visually impaired students as well as two specialized QRG's dealing with disability and employment.

For the Career Development Center at SUNY-Binghamton, the QRG's mode of delivery for services is consistent with the developmental model that forms the basis of most of our programming and allows us to serve other units of the university as well. Some basic administrative considerations make the technique even more appealing.

First, they are inexpensive to create and print. We began by developing a standard format for the first page of each Quick Reference Guide. This master or header page highlights the Center logo, a key element in raising office visibility. Having a supply of masters not only cuts down on costs, but speeds up the printing process. All QRG's are submitted for printing as camera-ready copy; layout is done in the Center. By submitting camera-ready work to the printer, the cost in many cases can be halved and the printing time drastically reduced.

This approach also allows staff members to draw on their expertise and interests and make a lasting contribution to Center programming, benefitting fellow staff members as well as students. A completed QRG represents a tremendous saving in staff time and more effective counselor/client contact.

Each new QRG includes a number and the title of the topic covered, improving visibility and recognition of the series. Numbering facilitates referral to the appropriate QRG and cross-referencing. Administrative considerations go beyond the Center itself: resources such as these provide tangible evidence of the Center's activities and offer a conceptual framework for career decision making and job search techniques.

While the concept was developed and applied in a Career Development Center, QRG's can be adopted for use in a variety of offices. It is ideal for an office that encourages self-help and must organize complex issues into manageable units. Several colleges have already emulated our approach; we are interested in others' experiences with different settings.

Quick Reference Guide: 1

(continued from page 28)

For many people, a review of career or job opportunities begins with a question about the "job outlook" or the "job market." While this information has a place in the overall career decision-making process, we caution against undue emphasis or reliance on this type of data. It is our hope that individuals preparing for or changing careers will begin at the left side of the chart on the front of this Quick Reference Guide and move to the right as they gather information and make tentative career decisions. We advise against focusing primarily on job market projections for two basic reasons:

1. It's great to know that a considerable demand is projected for "occutorps." However, if you are not interested in being an "occutorp," don't have the ability to be an "occutorp," and the field doesn't seem to provide you with the rewards and satisfaction you desire, do you really care about the demand for "occutorps"?
2. Virtually all job market projections originate from the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. The most frequently encountered publication providing this type of information is the *Occupational Outlook Handbook*. This book is the source document for countless studies, magazine articles, and newspaper stories on the "job market." Before making a career decision based solely on or primarily on job market projections, you may wish to read the section of the *Occupational Outlook Handbook* entitled "Assumptions and Methods Used in Preparing Employment Projections." It appears on pages 17 and 18 in the current edition.

Much is to be gained from reading these two pages. While we have not reprinted the entire section, we have presented the assumptions on which all projections are based.

- *The institutional framework of the U.S. economy will not change radically.*
- *Current social, technological, and scientific trends will continue, including values placed on work, education, income, and leisure.*
- ***The economy will gradually recover from the high unemployment levels of the mid-1970s and reach full employment (defined as an unemployment rate of 4 percent) in the mid-1980s.***
- *No major event such as widespread or long-lasting energy shortages or war will significantly alter the industrial structure of the economy or alter the rate of economic growth.*
- *Trends in the occupational structure of industries will not be altered radically by changes in relative wages, technological changes, or other factors.*

Care to take any bets?

N.B. Time marches on while you're marching.